Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:*

   Lakeside County Water and Sewer District
   253 Bierney Creek Rd
   Lakeside, MT 59922

2. *Type of action*: Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit 76LJ 30147909

3. *Water source name:* Groundwater

4. *Location affected by project*: The NE and N2N2SE Sec 13, the SE and E2SESW Sec 12, T26N, R21W, Flathead, MT. N2 and NWNESE Sec 18, the W2W2SW Sec 17, the SW, E2E2NW and W2W2NE Sec 7, T26N, R20W, Flathead, MT.

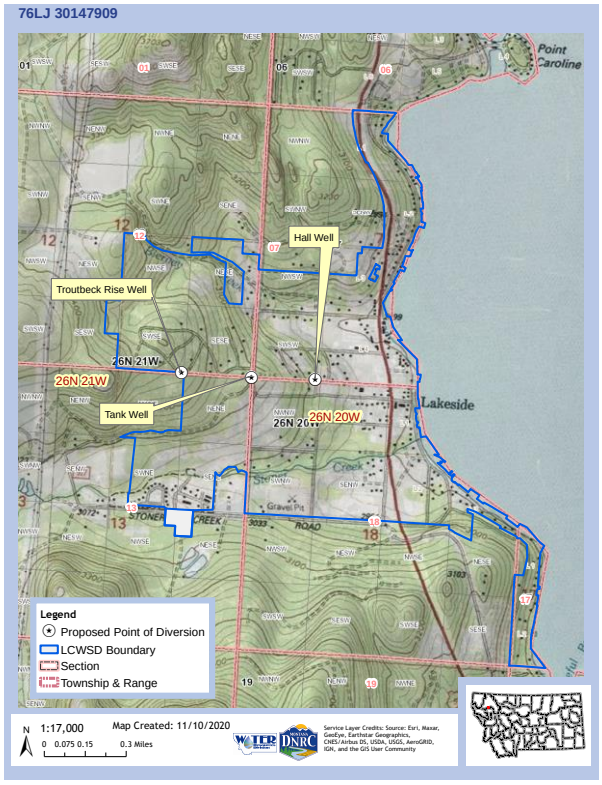

Figure 1: Proposed place of use and three points of diversion needing additional flow

5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*

The Applicant seeks authorization to divert 146 GPM of additional groundwater January 1st through December 31st for municipal use January 1st through December 31st from three of the Applicant's five manifold water distribution wells. The Applicant is not requesting additional volume from the three wells, volume has already been authorized for this manifold system, under previously filed and authorized water rights (76LJ 9256-00, 76LJ 103956-00, 76LJ 61905-00, 76LJ 105373-00 and 76LJ 30062687). The Applicant is requesting: an additional 11 GPM from the Troutbeck Rise well (GWIC No. 79933) located in the SESWSE Sec 12, T26N, R21W, Flathead County, MT; an additional 95 GPM from the Hall Well (GWIC No. 79859) located in the NENWNW Sec 18, T26N, R20W, Flathead County, MT; and an additional 40 GPM from the Tank Well (GWIC No. 160594) located in the SWSWSW Sec 7, T26N, R20W, Flathead County, MT. The DNRC shall approve the change if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Montana Natural Heritage Program: Endangered, Threatened Species and Species of Special Concern, Wetland Mapper program
-Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks (DFWP); Dewatered Stream Information
-Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) Clean Water Act Information and PWS Drinking Water Watch databases
-U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); web soil survey
-Montana Historical Society

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity *- Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

The Applicant proposes to divert 146 GPM of additional groundwater January 1st through December 31st for municipal use January 1st through December 31st from three of the Applicant's five manifold water distribution wells. The Applicant is not requesting additional volume from the three wells, volume has already been authorized for this manifold system, under previously filed and authorized water rights. The proposed use will not create new depletions to Flathead Lake.

Determination: No impact.

Water quality *- Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) Clean Water Act Information Center in 2020 Flathead Lake was listed as having one or more uses impaired due to one or more of the following probable causes: mercury, nitrogen (total), phosphorous (total), polychlorinated biphenyls and sedimentation/siltation. The Application is for groundwater, no additional volume is authorized. The Department found that the proposed use will not affect water quality.

Determination: No impact.

Groundwater *- Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

The Application is for groundwater, no additional volume is authorized. No new depletions to Flathead Lake or Stoner Creek will occur from the proposed permit. The Department found that the proposed use will not affect the quality of surface waters or groundwater.

Determination: No impact

DIVERSION WORKS *- Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

At full build out the public water supply system will consist of six wells (Brass well GWIC No. 79812, Hall well GWIC No. 79859, Tank well GWIC No.160594, Troutbeck Rise well GWIC No. 79933, Lakeside Estates Well GWIC No. 156694, and a redundant well yet to be drilled), two storage tanks (186,000-gallon and 120,000-gallon), one booster station and approximately 19.5 miles of various sized distribution piping ranging from 1.0 to 10.0 inches in diameter All wells divert water from a bedrock aquifer and are manifold together into the same distribution system.

The Hall well is equipped with a 20-hp Goulds model 150H20 8 stage submersible pump and a 20-hp Franklin Electric motor. The pump can produce 100 GPM at a total dynamic head (TDH) of 500 feet. Under actual operating conditions (TDH = 327 feet) the pump produces 195 GPM. The Tank well is equipped with a Robbco model 7CLE 4-stage submersible pump and a 50-hp Franklin Electric motor. The pump can produce 380 GPM at 332 feet of TDH. The Troutbeck Rise well is equipped with a 10-hp Grundfos model 40S100-30 stage submersible pump and 10-hp Franklin Electric motor. The pump can produce 51 GPM at a TDH of 490 feet. Based on supplied pump curves and pump specifications each well pump is capable of diverting the additional requested flow rate and previously authorized flow rate from each well. Each well was drilled by a licensed well driller. The water system is a permitted public water supply (No. MT0000266) under regulation of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MTDEQ). The system was designed by a licensed engineer and approved by the MTDEQ.

Determination: No impact.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species *- Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

The Montana Natural Heritage Program website was reviewed to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern" in Township 26N, Range 20W and 21W that could be impacted by the proposed project.

Plants:
The Howell's Quillwort (Isoetes howellii), Many-headed Sedge (Carex sychnocephala), and Panic Grass (Dichanthelium acuminatum, are listed by MFWP meaning their populations are at risk because their numbers are very limited.

Animals:
The Bull Trout (Salvelinus confluentus) and Grizzly Bear are listed as threatened and the Westslope Cutthroat Trout (Oncorhynchus clarkia lewisi), and Fisher (Martes pennanti) are listed as sensitive species by the USFS. The Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodia), Brown Creeper (Certhia americana), Great Gray Owl (Strix nebulosa), Evening Grosbeak (Fringillidae), Pileated Woodpecker (Dryocopus pileatus), Common Tern (Sterna hirundo), Cassin's Finch (Haemorhous cassinii), Little Brown Myotis (Myotis lucifugus), Pygmy Whitefish (Prosopium coulteri), Northern Alligator Lizard (Elgaria coerulea), and Western Skink (Plestiodon skiltonianus) are listed by MFWP meaning their populations are at risk because their numbers are very limited. This is a change application; historic diverted volumes and flow rates will not increase. An adequate quantity of water will still exist in Flathead Lake to maintain existing populations of both threatened and sensitive species of fish. Any impacts to sensitive mammal species or plants most likely have already occurred. The proposed project will not impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants and aquatic species or any species of special concern

Determination: No impact.

Wetlands *- Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A, project does not involve wetlands.

Ponds *- For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A, project does not involve ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

According to soil survey data provided by the NRCS, soil within the place of use consists mostly of ashy silt loam and gravelly silt. The capacity of the silt loam to transmit water is moderately high to high (0.57 to 1.98 in/hr). The capacity of the gravely silt to transmit water is moderately high to high (0.57 to 1.98 in/hr). Soils within the proposed place of use are not susceptible to saline seep. The use of groundwater will not cause degradation of soil quality and stability.

Determination: No impact.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

The proposed place of use will have its vegetation disturbed. Revegetation will occur for soil stability. Noxious weeds will be managed according to Flathead County policies.

Determination: No impact.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

No air pollutants were identified as resulting from the Applicants proposed use of groundwater.

Determination: No impact.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.

Determination: No impact.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

All impacts to land, water and energy have been identified and no further impacts are anticipated.

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

The project is located in an area with no locally adopted environmental plans.

Determination: No impact.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

The proposed project will not inhibit, alter or impair access to present recreational opportunities in the area. The project is not expected to create any significant pollution, noise, or traffic congestion in the area that may alter the quality of recreational opportunities. The proposed place of use and diversion do not exist on land designated as wilderness.

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts human health.*

There should be no significant negative impact on human health from this proposed use.

Determination: No impact.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there is any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
*Yes___ No_**x**__ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

Determination: No impact.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

(a) *Cultural uniqueness and diversity?* None identified.

(b) *Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* None identified.

(c) *Existing land uses?* None identified.

(d) *Quantity and distribution of employment?* None identified.

(e) *Distribution and density of population and housing?* None identified.

(f) *Demands for government services?* None identified.

(g) *Industrial and commercial activity?* None identified.

(h) *Utilities?* None identified.

(i) *Transportation?* None identified.

(j) *Safety?* None identified.

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* None identified.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts: None identified.

Cumulative Impacts: None identified.

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:***

No reasonable alternatives were identified in the EA.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative:*** None identified.

2 ***Comments and Responses***

4. ***Finding:***
*Yes___ No_**X**__ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action because no significant impacts were identified.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Melissa Brickl
Title: Hydrologist/Water Resource Specialist
Date: December 21, 2020